Foreword

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NOAA Fisheries Service
Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service), Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program (NCRPP) was initiated in 1999. The goals of this program are to enhance the data upon which fishery management decisions are made as well as to improve communication and collaboration among commercial fishery participants, scientists and fishery managers. NOAA Fisheries Service works in close collaboration with the New England Fishery Management Council's Research Steering Committee to set research priorities to meet management information needs.

Fishery management is, by nature, a multiple year endeavor which requires a time series of fishery dependent and independent information. Additionally, there are needs for immediate short-term biological, oceanographic, social, economic and habitat information to help resolve fishery management issues. Thus, the program established two avenues to pursue cooperative research through longer and short-term projects. First, short-term research projects are funded annually through competitive contracts. Second, three longer-term collaborative research projects were developed. These projects include: 1) a pilot study fleet (fishery dependent data); 2) a pilot industry based survey (fishery independent data); and 3) groundfish tagging (stock structure, movements and mixing, and biological data).

> First, a number of short-term research projects have been developed to work primarily on commercial fishing gear modifications, improve selectivity of catch on directed species, reduce bycatch, and study habitat reactions to mobile and fixed fishing gear.
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> Second, two cooperative research fleets have been established to collect detailed fishery dependent and independent information from commercial fishing vessels. The original concept, developed by the Canadians, referred to these as "sentinel fleets". In the New England groundfish setting it is more appropriate to consider two industry research fleets. A pilot industry-based survey fleet (fishery independent) and a pilot commercial study fleet (fishery dependent) have been developed.
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> Additionally, extensive tagging programs are being conducted on a number of groundfish species to collect information on migrations and movements of fish, identify localized or subregional stocks, and collect biological and demographic information on these species.

For further information on the Cooperative Research Partners Programs please contact:

National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service)
Northeast Cooperative Research Partners Program

(978) 281-9276 – Northeast Regional Office of Cooperative Research
(401) 782-3323 – Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Cooperative Research Office, Narragansett Laboratory

www.nero.noaa.gov/StateFedOff/coopresearch/

1.0 Project Summary

This project designed an electronic logbook and data reporting system for groundfish vessels. It is designed to meet the business needs of the fishermen as well as enabling them to fulfill the regulatory requirements for data reporting to NMFS for all permitted groundfish vessels. The electronic logbook software is designed for the desktop as opposed to the internet because it focuses on the fishermen's business requirements rather than regulatory requirements. It is not intended to be a form that the fishermen must fill out. It is intended to be a business tool. If the electronic logbook software is well written, the fishermen will view the generation of trip report data as just another program option.

Not only is the electronic logbook software designed for fishermen, it is designed by them. One of the principals on the project is an experienced lobsterman/fisherman. Twelve Windows-based laptop computers were purchased through this project then distributed, with the software, to a relatively diverse set of fishermen for their comments and suggestions. Even though the software will work on any Windows-based system, laptops were chosen due to their high degree of portability. The system could be easily moved from boat to home to office, etc. Windows was chosen as an operating environment due to its widespread popularity. Almost everyone has some familiarity with Windows. The electronic logbook software has also been incorporated into the Study Fleet Project as a possible component of their solution set. Comments received from the study fleet participants as well as their integration expertise have been invaluable to this project.

The electronic logbook software should reduce the burden on fishermen in meeting regulations by simplifying logbook reporting and reducing paperwork. It should reduce the burden on NMFS because previously handwritten, error-prone information will be in electronic format. This data would be checked for errors prior to input to the NMFS database. As a result, data entry, error-checking, as well as paper storage will be minimized if not eliminated. It should improve the timeliness and granularity of the data

for scientific and policy analysis because of the reduced effort required for data submissions. The fishermen should also be able to improve their overall business operations, record keeping, and fishing activity management due to improved data storage, organization, and reporting capabilities.